



# *Saint Louis Audubon*

## *Bulletin*

February, 1964

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**ALFRED G. ETTER**

**FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 1964**

**Third Baptist Church, Grand and Washington — 8:15 P.M.**  
**"AWAKE TO NATURE"**

Dr. Alfred G. Etter has devoted his life to studying the world of nature in an effort to discover some of the complex forces which govern the wildlife community. He is an ecologist with broad training received at Washington University and the University of Wisconsin. A student of the well known wildlife conservationist, Aldo Leopold, Dr. Etter has become a speaker, writer, and teacher with similar penetrating understanding of the mechanisms of nature. His writings have appeared frequently in Audubon Magazine, as well as other publications.

Dr. Etter's research has included studies of range and water problems in the Southwest, the ecology of pastures in Missouri, and plant succession on the Mississippi River. He has served as Consultant Ecologist for the government, Research Associate for the Washington University School of Medicine, and has taught ecology and conservation at Michigan State University.

His travels have taken him to such remote places as Ethiopia, Ghana, and the Ascension Islands in the South Atlantic.

Wherever he has lived, Dr. Etter has always made a point of becoming familiar with his environment. The knowledge he has gained from these studies has more than once served as the basis for his popular lecture films. His authoritative presentations have gained him an enviable reputation as scientist, photographer, and lecturer.

Following the footsteps of a young boy and his animal companions, we ramble over a farm and along a creek and get acquainted with the living creatures encountered along the way. Digging for moles and turtle eggs; discovering fishing herons and snapping turtles provide moments of comedy and excitement.

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The scene changes to the north woods of Michigan where campers make their way to Isle Royale in Lake Superior. The "health and soundness of nature" are clearly evident as we join in a search for moose, venture under waterfalls, and stand quietly in the midst of a flock of crossbills.

Returning from the wilderness we find that nature exists in the suburbs too. Familiar songbirds and small animals live next door, on the vacant lots and in the parks. But here, all too often, we find that living with nature is becoming a forgotten art. Man forces his control on the earth, altering the landscape and poisoning it with chemicals. Film sequences used on television to document "The Silent Spring of Rachel Carson" fill the screen in their original color as Dr. Etter speaks from his personal experience of the effects of spraying programs on wildlife.

*Awake to Nature* challenges each of us to help keep our earth habitable, to safeguard the health and soundness of nature, to make of our environment something of which our generations can be rightfully proud.

## EASTERN AUSTRIA — BIRDWATCHERS PARADISE

By BERTHA MASSIE

Many European travelers get to Vienna but unfortunately too few of those interested in birds realize how close they are to a birder's paradise—Neusiedlam-See which is about thirty miles southeast . . . close to the Hungarian border. The Australian "Vogelwarte" or bird banding headquarters is located there.

Neusiedlersee which is a large, very shallow lake similar to those found in the open steppes of eastern Europe and Asia attracts many birds that do not normally cross the "iron curtain". Konrad Lorenz in "King Solomon's Ring" gives a vivid description of birding in this area.

The very charming, able and dedicated young man in charge of the "Vogelwarte", Herr Hans Martin Steiner met our group in Vienna. (Our group consisted of sixteen people traveling on a four week escorted "Nature Tour" led by Orville Crowder of Washington, D. C. If this type of trip interests you, his advertisement appears in Audubon Magazine.) Accompanying Herr Steiner was Herr Aschenbrenner, a member of the Vienna police department who is an avid birder particularly interested in the Red Breasted Flycatcher, an uncommon bird in that area. The remote areas of the Vienna Woods which we visited seemed true to song and story . . . the trees were large and beautiful and there were no other people around. The flycatcher was present but very wary and our guide was the only one to have a good look at it but we had fine views of other birds including Hawfinch, Robins as well as Green and Great Spotted Woodpeckers. In the area near Mayerling (a few people did some sightseeing while the rest of us birded), we had a Serin on its nest.

Before going to Neusiedl we stopped on the Danube flood plain, across the river from Vienna, which is a spot for the marsh loving warblers. (And

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if you think our warblers are difficult, just try the European varieties . . . a different family. Sylviidae and not related to ours. They look alike . . . mainly small brown tan birds but with few distinctive markings. The Chiff Chaff and Willow Warbler are identical in appearance but have very different songs and are easy to separate as long as they call. Fortunately this was the end of May and the birds were singing.) In a comparatively short stay in the area we saw the Reed and Marsh Warblers, the Blackcap (one of the easy ones on a sight basis), the Whitethroat (which is easy unless it is a Lesser Whitethroat), the Chiff Chaff and Wood Warbler and heard the River and Willow Warblers. In addition we had good looks at others including the Penduline Tit, Cuckoo (a parasitic bird that has a flight pattern somewhat like our Sparrow Hawk) and Short Toed Tree Creeper. Europe has two tree creepers which are very similar in appearance (The Tree Creeper is the same as our Brown Creeper) but have different elevation patterns . . . the Tree Creeper is found in the mountains and at elevations above 3000 feet whereas the Short Toed variety always is found at lower elevations.

The Leiner Hotel where we stayed in Neusiedl has a new, modern addition with rooms with private baths. A "lick and a promise" type of cleanup before dinner enabled some of us to add a couple of more lifers in short order. The Syrian Woodpecker was nesting in a tree near the hotel and the Lesser Grey Shrike was sitting on a wire waiting for us. The area was full of Collared Turtle Doves that called constantly.

Then came the day of days. A before breakfast jaunt gave us beautiful views of Sedge Warblers sitting on the reeds, Red Backed Shrikes, Black Redstarts, Dunnocks, Turtle Doves and Collared Turtle Doves and more views of the Syrian Woodpecker.

Lapwings were very common in the fields and White Storks were seen with some frequency. A stop at a small pond yielded Garganeys and Pochards in addition to a Ruff. Nearing the Hungarian border Herr Steiner spied a Hoopoe and in his excitement tried to take the microphone out of the bus with him. A close view of a Hoopoe with its crest raised is an unforgettable sight. While we were out of the bus looking around some White Storks flew by . . . they are beautiful to see even in an area in which they are comparatively common . . . but almost immediately two Black Storks came into view. The German and Belgian birders at the hotel were green with envy when we reported that night . . . some of them had made numerous trips to this area in an attempt to get these storks.

A bird that we hoped to see was the Great Bustard . . . the heaviest bird capable of flight, weighing some 35 pounds. Again we were lucky . . . instead of just getting a view of the head of the bird sticking up in the tall grass, we actually saw one of these 40 inch birds in flight at rather close range. An eagle was seen but it was too far away to determine the species—Imperial or Spotted. All of this in one spot was almost too much.

After lunch we drove to Langelacke, a large lake with a variety of birds including Black Headed Gulls, Spoonbills and Grey Lag Geese. A small marshy area yielded Temminck's Stints, Redshanks, Wood Sandpipers, Avocets, Little Ringed Plovers, Kentish Plovers (our Snowy) as well as Crested Larks. A Nightjar which had been seen in a nearby wooded area refused to show itself but we did find the Barred Warbler.

All day long Herr Steiner kept telling us that we were only one third thru with our trip. Most people were quite exhausted when we returned to the hotel after this long exciting day, but a couple of us were gluttons for punishment. We walked out thru the reeds and very rough piles of dirt next to a ditch trying to locate Bearded Tits which had been seen in this area on the

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1962 trip. They were not to be seen but we did find at very close range a White Spotted Bluethroat, an incredibly lovely little bird (5½ inches) with a bright blue throat patch surrounding a white spot. (The Scandinavian form which we saw later has a red center spot.) After dinner Herr Steiner showed slides of his trip to Turkey where he was doing a research study on small mammals for his thesis.

Our before breakfast walk the next morning again produced wonderful views of Bluethroats. The morning trip was a visit to the "Vogelwarte" and a climb up into the lookout tower for a view over this three to four foot deep lake which lacks a normal source of water supply and drainage. Flying off in the distance we could see Little Gulls, Black and Common Terns (All the same as ours) but we also had White Winged Black Terns, a much rarer bird, as well as the Great White Herons (Common Egret), Herons, Purple Herons, Mallards, Shovelers and Tufted Ducks. Overhead at various times, in addition to some of herons were Buzzards (Buteos, not vultures . . . Latin name *Buteo buteo*), Marsh Harriers (not our Marsh Hawk which is their Hen Harrier . . . it would have been nice if the British and Americans had gotten together on nomenclature), Montagu's Harrier and Kestrels (closely related to our Sparrow Hawk but quite different from the British Sparrow Hawk).

This bird banding station operates on a very limited budget . . . there was not a telescope available for observations . . . Herr Steiner had such fun with mine that as a thank you for his wonderful cooperation, we took up a collection and gave him money to buy one for his own use. In addition to the usual migration studies at the "Vogelwarte" Herr Steiner has made some most interesting exhibits of wing feathers of birds of the area with each feather mounted separately.

After lunch we drove to the west side of Lake Neusiedl to the town of Rust, (See R. T. Peterson's article on Storks in the National Geographic, June, 1962.), where there were thirty active storks nests this year. The schoolmaster who is known as the "stork Father" because of his interest in the birds took us up into the church steeple where we could look down on one of the active nests as well as get an overall view of the nests in the town.

En route some of the group saw a Golden Oriole, a bird that we heard with some frequency but was very elusive sightwise. Rollers which are frequently seen near the Esterhazy Estate (Shades of Haydn) were not accommodating this year, and we did not go into the estate where all the European woodpeckers are reputed to be found.

Early evening brought a return trip to the "Vogelwarte" where we saw and heard Savi's Warbler, watched a Little Bittern fly by and saw a lovely bight of Spoonbills in the pink light. There was a complete feeling of peacefulness and all's well with the world as we watched the fading light from the tower . . . an experience that unfortunately is all too rare.

The return trip to Vienna yielded another species that had eluded us previously . . . the Ortolan Bunting whose call notes are like the opening notes of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony . . . the V for Victory notes. Our total count for the three days was 100 species of which only 15 are ever found in the United States. It was an unforgettable experience.

Note: We are grateful to Bertha Massie for an article that could not be reproduced by any other member of our Society.



## A REVIEW OF THE ST. LOUIS AREA 1963 BIRDS

By J. EARL COMFORT

Some rare late Fall listings at Swan Lake in Calhoun Co., Ill. not previously mentioned were Whistling Swan, Goshawk, Common Scoter, Bonaparte's Gull and Evocet. But the bird of the year at this popular Calhoun Unit of the Federal Wildfowl Refuge was a male Barrow's Goldeneye Duck by Sally Vasse on Dec. 13th, our first modern area listing of this species.

Red Crossbills were very much in the St. Louis picture in the late Fall and during the present winter, numbering up to 17 on one occasion at Shaw's Garden Arboretum, with 2 showing up at the August A. Busch Wildlife Area. Dr. and Mrs. Ralph Laffey were the original discoverers of these welcome birds. Steve Hanselmann found rare Smith's Longspurs late in the year in St. Charles County.

Dick Anderson got the new year under way in good fashion with an adult Golden Eagle in St. Charles County near the Dardenne Club on the 5th. On the 11th the Webster Groves Nature Study group chalked up a Glaucous Gull above Alton near Grafton. Earl Hath reported first bird on his list for new year on Jan. 1 was Brown Creeper seen from bedroom window on river bluffs.

In early January Eugene and Diane Wilhelm gave us a Bohemian Waxwing at the Arboretum.

On the 18th Jack Van Benthuyzen located an extremely rare Pine Grosbeak near Creve Coeur Lake in St. Louis County.

A review of the 1963 birds checked within a 50 mile radius of the city is quite revealing with an unusually high total of 279 species on our composite list. Besides the Barrow's Goldeneye mentioned there were 6 other species considered rare enough for special mention, a Ferruginous Hawk by Dick Anderson and Bertha Massie below Alton on January 20th, a Yellow Rail by Steve Hanselmann at Creve Coeur Lake, October 5th, a Common Scoter at Swan Lake on November 24th by Rick and Mitzi Anderson. A Glossy Ibis by Dave Jones and others later) on the Mississippi River Illinois levees below St. Louis on June 8th, a White Ibis on the levee by Kathryn Arhos and Earl Comfort on July 4th (it was a discovery of Kathryn), another seen later in the month by others, and Wood Ibis by Wally George on August 8th on the levee. Wally's original 23 Woods were shared later in the day by several others. This was an amazing number of Wood Ibises for this region.

The 10 listers of more than 200 species in our area gave us an above average total for membership in the "200 club". High man, Steve Hanselmann, set an individual record with 367, one above Dick Anderson's record set in an earlier year. Kathryn Arhos was next with 247, her list also setting a record for lady listers. Others above 200 were Dick Anderson, 235; Earl Comfort, 229; Dr. Laffey, 225; Mike Flieg, 223; Earl Hath, 223; Wally



George, 208; Mary Weise, 205, and Mildred Anderson, 204. Mary and Dr. Laffey were new members of the group.

The 24 species of ducks set a record for any one year. There were 35 kinds of warblers and 33 species of the finch family. A wintering Cape May Warbler was quite unusual.

Some other rare 1963 finds (a few already mentioned) were White Pelican, Cattle Egret, Whistling Swan, Purple Gallinule, Glaucous Gull, Black Vulture, Mississippi Kite, Turnstone, Willet, Avocet, Pine Warbler, Red Crossbill and Smith's Longspur. A Pine Warbler was another unusual winter visitant.

## ST. LOUIS AUDUBON SOCIETY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

By J. EARL COMFORT

Orchard Farm, Mo. (all points within a 15 mile diameter circle, center Orchard Farm as last year; mostly along Mississippi River on Missouri side; bottomlands and sloughs 71%, weed grown fields 4%, tilled fields and airfield 25%).—Dec. 21; 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Clear; temp. —6 degree to 4 degrees; wind NNW 6 m.p.h. to 4 m.p.h.; ground snow covered, all waters, including the rivers, frozen solidly. Thirteen observers in 1 party. Total party hours, 8 (2½ on foot, 5½ by car); total party miles, 44 (2¼ on foot, 41¾ by car). Great Blue Heron, 1; Mallard, 1; Common Goldeneye, 2; Eastern Red-tailed Hawk, 18; Krider's Red-tailed Hawk, 1; Rough-legged Hawk, 1; Bald Eagle, 5; Marsh Hawk, 7; Sparrow Hawk, 6; Bob White, 41; Pheasant, 4; Mourning Dove, 2; Flicker, 2; Pileated Woodpecker, 3; Red-bellied Woodpecker, 29; Red-headed Woodpecker, 1; Hairy Woodpecker, 1; Downy Woodpecker, 15; Northern Horned Lark, 5; Prairie Horned Lark, 361; Blue Jay, 8; Black-Capped Chickadee, 24; Crow, 55; Titmouse, 12; White-breasted Nuthatch, 2; Brown Creeper, 5; Winter Wren, 1; Carolina Wren, 1; Mockingbird, 1; Hermit Thrush, 2; Starling, 211; House Sparrow, 297; European Tree Sparrow, 21; Eastern Meadowlark, 148; Red-winged Blackbird, 1223; Rusty Blackbird, 8; Common Grackle, 5; Cardinal, 194; Siskin, 5; Goldfinch, 127; Slate-colored Junco, 26; Eastern Tree Sparrow, 78; Swamp Sparrow, 15; Mississippi Song Sparrow, 27; Lapland Longspur, 5. Total, 45 species; about 3007 individuals—Dick Anderson, Kathryn Arhos, Alberta Bolinger, Duis Bolinger, Earl Comfort, Mrs. John Darnton, Bob Dwyer, Earl Hath, Mr. and Mrs. Joel Massie, Winnifried Melay, Jimmy Jackson, Mrs. Florence J. Spring.

## CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT ALTON, ILLINOIS

By O. C. K. HUTCHINSON

The Christmas Bird Count was made this year under a last minute switch in plans, and resulted in only four of the "old standby" birders participating. Apologies to those who would have gone along had plans been set up in proper time.

Fr. Link started our group making the Annual Christmas Bird Count—that was 1937. A report on the count has gone in to the Audubon National headquarters covering nearly every year since. Some years the group making the count would be large, requiring that the area be divided into two or three teams. More recently we miss the leadership of Fr. Link and the groups have been smaller, this year only four.

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Our day started at 7:30; first stop above Grafton where the Boy's Camp road turns off. Then on up the river road, exploring most of the side roads leading back into the hollows and those going down to the river. For the most part the best birding is along waterways. A few species are found in dry areas, but hunting along a stream invariably yields better results. Even though the stream be frozen up, the bird count will be better.

One of the interesting experiences of our day came in noting pronounced differences from previous years, some obviously due to weather, etc., others leave the answer open. One of these was the marked difference in the number of crows. They were everywhere; overhead, on the ice along the river, the trees in the park immediately in front of Marquette Lodge were full of them. Another marked difference was Gulls. Other years we have always noted at least a few along the river; some years a great many; this year not one Gull. At the Alton dam at this time of the year there are usually many of them; none now. An unusually large count this year — delightfully so — our beautiful Cardinals. Many of the males seem to have already donned their brilliant red spring coats, and the pretty olive colored females are always delightful. As usual Juncos (Snow Birds) and Chickadees were plentiful. One point which distresses us greatly is the very low count in all five species of woodpeckers. An exception in a way was the big black and white Piliated, with his great flaming red top-knot. We were delighted to see five of them. They are a very shy bird, so when we record even one it is always gratifying. Many of us feel that the serious decline in the number of woodpeckers is caused by the Starlings. At nesting time, the woodpeckers work long and hard, digging out a nest-hole in a dead branch. Then a starling drives him out and takes over the nest. I have watched this happen repeatedly, even in our own yard. (P.S.—In that particular case the starling family got into trouble, too) but it was too late.

Nation wide there is much distress because of rapidly decreasing records on the big beautiful Bald Eagle. National Audubon has commissioned one of its best men to study the situation. During the winter, when the river is frozen, our local Eagle count is very large. This year we observed 33 birds. The Fish and Wildlife men stationed in the Grafton area reported 93 Eagles, most of them on the ice at Swan Lake Refuge.

As is to be expected in the vicinity of the refuge, there were many thousands of ducks. But in comparison with other years the duck count is low. The count on geese is better, especially in the reservation area at Cairo.

An unusual find, one lone Great Blue Heron. Once before, when the temperature during Christmas week was warm, we counted about 20 herons, feeding along the shore, at Swan Lake. But with pretty much everything frozen up this year, this poor bird must find pretty slim pickings. He should have gone south some time ago, with the rest of his kind.

Following is a list of the birds observed: Great Blue Heron, 1; Snow Goose, 200; Blue Goose, 250; Mallard Duck, 5,500; Scaup, 60; Morganser, 100; Cooper Hawk, 2; Red Tailed Hawk, 3; Bald Eagle, 33; Sparrow Hawk, 2; Mourning Dove, 1; Flicker, 14; Pileated Woodpecker, 5; Red-bellied Woodpecker, 10; Hairy Woodpecker, 2; Downy Woodpecker, 11; Blue Jay, 14; Crow, 550; Chickadee, 68; Titmouse, 28; Nuthatch, 6; Carolina Wren, 1; Robin, 2; Starling, 230; House Sparrow, 190; Redwing Blackbird, 85; Cardinal, 188; Goldfinch, 45; Junco, 196; Tree Sparrow, 3; White-crowned Sparrow, 2; Song Sparrow, 2.

The count was made by Jack Buese, John Crivello, Cindy Deem, Cora Hutchinson, O. C. K. Hutchinson.

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## ST. LOUIS AUDUBON SOCIETY

5079 Waterman Ave.  
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Earl H. Hath.....President  
Miss Alberta Bolinger.....Executive Secretary

St. Louis Audubon Society  
5079 Waterman Ave.  
St. Louis, Mo. 63108

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